



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Public Instruction  
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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\*\*\* AN AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK OP ED \*\*\*

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## Keep changes in education focused on children

*By State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster*

This year's observance of American Education Week, Nov. 16-22, basks in the excitement of our nation's recent election. Change is coming.

The annual theme for this event, "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility," sends a clear message to those who will shape education policy in Washington. Our children deserve a chance to succeed. A quality education is part of that foundation for success. We have a moral obligation to keep the good of our children, all of our children, at the heart of any changes to the educational landscape.

The variety of perspectives that come together in our public schools helps students learn in new ways, which strengthens our democracy. American creativity and entrepreneurship springs from the greatness of our diversity. The vitality of our nation depends on developing that creativity and entrepreneurship in our public schools.

From age-appropriate early learning in prekindergarten to challenging coursework that sparks innovation and creativity in high school, our public schools must be a bastion for teaching the skills our children need for the future. Educational success for this generation of students means they must be able to think critically, make decisions, work cooperatively, analyze data, synthesize information, and solve complex problems. Learning these 21st century skills must occur at every grade level and through every subject.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills focuses on these skills, grounding them in academic content. Wisconsin joined the partnership to bring meaningful change to education in our state. We

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want our children to learn their academic subjects by applying knowledge to today's real-world challenges. Education that is both excellent and equitable must help students prepare for a future we have not yet imagined. That is our vision for Wisconsin's public schools.

American Education Week began in 1921 to bring attention to the importance of our public elementary and secondary schools. The need for that public investment is just as important today. As we celebrate American Education Week, let us keep the vision for education's future focused on what is good for all of our children.

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*Elizabeth Burmaster is the elected state superintendent of public instruction.*

**NOTES:** A high-resolution photo of the state superintendent is available on the Department of Public Instruction "Media Contacts and Resources" webpage at <http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/vm-media.html>. This editorial is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008\\_168.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_168.pdf). An American Education Week proclamation from State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster also is available online at <http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/aewproc08.pdf>.